



WATERVILLE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

DATE OF MEETING: May 17, 2021

VENUE: Via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: x Samantha Burdick, Chair
x April Chiriboga
x Tom DePre
x David Johnson
x Hilary Koch
x Uria Pelletier
x Bruce White

STAFF PRESENT: Ann Beverage, City Planner

MINUTES:

David Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2021, meeting. Samantha Burdick seconded. Vote 7-0 in favor.

ITEM 1: NextGrid is requesting review for revisions to a previously approved plan for a solar farm to be constructed at 101 Webb Road. This review is in accordance with Section 9.4 of the Subdivision & Site Plan Review Ordinance.

Engineer Gil Paquette reported that NextGrid revised the site plan for its Webb Road Solar Project to minimize environmental impacts. The previously approved layout would have required a stream crossing with the installation of a culvert for a new access road. The stream is a tributary to the Kennebec River, which is classified as Atlantic salmon habitat (a federally listed endangered species).

The previous landowner who hayed this land installed two culverts on the eastern side of the property to access the northern portion of the parcel. One is a crushed corrugated metal pipe and the other is an undersized plastic pipe. In April of 2021, the plastic pipe was passing very minimal water as it was blocked by natural debris. Additionally, the existing crossing does not allow for upstream passage of fish and other aquatic organisms, because the elevation of the plastic pipe is too high. The proposed revised plan affords an opportunity to improve the crossing by replacing two culverts with one culvert. The new culvert to be installed for this project will be set to the correct elevation, will be properly sized, and will have an open bottom to allow for a stream bed of natural material. This approach is similar to a stream restoration project.

The new layout eliminates panels to the north of the residences on Webb Road. The closest

residence to the west would be 1,923 feet, the closest residence to the northwest would be 1,846 feet, and the closest residence to the north would be 2,124 feet. The east side of the parcel is bounded by I-95 and therefore the closest residence to the east would be on the opposite side of the highway.

As a result of proposed changes to the plan, NextGrid is requesting that the portion of the revised layout that is north of the CMP easement be rezoned to allow for solar panels. The area under consideration for rezoning is approximately 2.1 acres. That area is surrounded by forest and therefore will not be seen from any vantage point.

ACTION:

Samantha Burdick made a motion to postpone the vote on the revised site plan until after the property is rezoned. Tom DePre seconded. Vote 7-0 in favor.

ITEM 2: Kennebec Water District is requesting Informal Pre-application Review for a fleet operation and business office building to be constructed at 131 Drummond Avenue. This review is in accordance with Article 4 of the Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance.

Engineer Owens McCullough with Sebago Technics presented plans for a Kennebec Water District (KWD) fleet operations and business office building to be constructed at 131 Drummond Avenue across the road from Arbos. The approximately 15-acre site will be secured with a six-foot high gated perimeter fence. Two driveways off Drummond Avenue will provide access to the site, one for operations and one for the public.

The compound will include three buildings. A 21,000 square-foot building will provide space for vehicle maintenance, a wash bay, vehicle parking, storage, and administrative offices. An 8,000 square-foot structure will be used to store cold patch, loam, stone, and backfill sand. Pipes will be stored in a 4,000 square-foot metal structure. In addition, there will be an outdoor laydown area for pipes and trailers. A gate will provide access to a KWD main in Central Avenue. Stormwater will flow to a detention basin where it will be treated and released.

This project will require a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers and two permits from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP). MDEP requires a Site Location Of Development (SLODA) permit (for 3 or more acres of non-revegetated surface) and a Natural Resources Protection (NRPA) permit (for filling over an acre of wetland).

ITEM 3: BACAS is requesting rezoning for 72 Pleasant Street (Assessor Map 48, Parcels 201, 201-1, and 201-2) from Residential-D (R-D) and Residential-B (R-B) to Contract Zoned District/Commercial-A (CZD/C-A). The request is to allow for the conversion of the former Sacred Heart Church to an events center as well as commercial use of the office building and continued residential use of the rectory. This review is in accordance with Section 7.1 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Jennifer Bergeron, president of BACAS, told the Board that the company wants to convert Sacred Heart Church, a gathering place, to an events center, a place for weddings, retirements, baby showers, conferences, craft fairs, comedy shows, live music, and fashion shows. She said that her business partner will reside in the rectory and the church office building will be used as either an office or a beauty salon. Ms. Bergeron said that the company wants to preserve the building without negatively impacting the neighborhood or the residential properties she owns

near the church. The company will add landscaping to create an attractive site for taking photographs.

DISCUSSION:

Neighbors expressed concerns about noise from events and from people leaving events, inadequate parking necessitating parking on quiet neighborhood streets, headlights shining into nearby homes, hours of operation, alcohol consumption, and potential for outdoor events. Neighbor Rien Finch stated that without restrictions on the use of the property, the developer will be sacrificing the neighborhood to save the church.

Ms. Bergeron agreed to contract zoning and restricting the number of persons in the venue based upon the number of parking spaces on site, rather than the (presumably) higher occupancy that would be allowed by fire code. Section 4.3.21.A(6) of the Zoning Ordinance requires one parking space per three seats or sixty inches of permanent bench space and the property has roughly 100 parking spaces. The exact number of parking spaces is not clear, because the lot no longer is striped, but with 100 parking spaces, attendance would be limited to 300 persons.

Ms. Bergeron did not agree to restricted hours of operation. She said that she has to be able to lease the property according to the needs of potential users of the space to make the purchase financially viable.

ACTION:

Uria Pelletier made a motion to table action on the request for rezoning until the June 7, 2021, meeting to notify abutters and to give the Board time to consider conditions attached to the contract zone. Hilary Koch seconded. Vote 4-3 in favor.